

7/24/76

THE PUERTO RICAN ELECTIONS AND CUBA

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN EXAMINES PUERTO RICO'S CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND CUBA'S ATTEMPTS TO MEDDLE IN IT.

VOICE: FOUR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE CONTENDING IN THE ISLAND'S GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN WHICH CULMINATES AT THE POLLS NOVEMBER SECOND. (OPT) VOTERS WILL ELECT A GOVERNOR, RESIDENT COMMISSIONER IN WASHINGTON, THE MAYORS OF THEIR CITIES AND TOWNS, AND MOST OF BOTH HOUSES OF THEIR LEGISLATURE. (END OPT)

OF THE FOUR PARTIES, TWO ADVOCATE FULL INDEPENDENCE FROM THE UNITED STATES, ANOTHER THE CONTINUANCE OF PUERTO RICO'S STATUS AS A COMMONWEALTH AND THE FOURTH OUTRIGHT STATEHOOD--WHICH WOULD MAKE THE ISLAND THE FIFTY-FIRST STATE OF THE UNION.

(OPT) THE ISSUES THIS YEAR ARE A MIXTURE OF THE OLD AND THE NEW. THE NEW IS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION PUERTO RICO FACES AS A RESULT OF THE WORLDWIDE RECESSION. THE OLD IS THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF PUERTO RICO'S POLITICAL STATUS--AN ISSUE THAT HAS DOMINATED ITS ELECTIONS FOR THE PAST TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AS A COMMONWEALTH. (END OPT)

IN PAST ELECTIONS, VOTERS FOR INDEPENDENCE HAVE TRAILED FAR BEHIND THOSE ADVOCATING THE OTHER TWO CONCEPTS--COMMONWEALTH OR STATEHOOD--POLLING LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT. STATEHOOD ADVOCATES HAVE WON ONLY ONE ELECTION --IN 1968--WITH THE REST GOING TO COMMONWEALTH BACKERS.

ALL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS -- INCLUDING THE CURRENT ONE -- HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED IN A CLIMATE OF FREE, DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE. NEVERTHELESS, HAVANA PERSISTS--AS IT HAS IN THE PAST--IN TRYING TO MEDDLE IN IT. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS CUBA HAS USED ALL KINDS OF

INTERNATIONAL FORUMS TO RAISE THE SPECIOUS ISSUE OF PUERTO RICO'S INDEPENDENCE--SPECIOUS SINCE PUERTO RICAN VOTERS HAVE REJECTED IT REPEATEDLY. HAVANA UNDOUBTEDLY WILL DO SO AGAIN AT THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE NEXT MONTH IN SRI LANKA.

ALL ALONG HAVANA HAS TREATED PUERTO RICO AS PART OF ITS POLICY OF INTERFERING ANYWHERE AS A SELF-APPOINTED CHAMPION OF REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY. THIS YEAR THE CUBAN EFFORT IS MORE TARGETED--TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM HAVANA'S INTERVENTIONISM IN AFRICA AS A SOVIET SURROGATE AND THE CONCERN THIS HAS RAISED IN NON-COMMUNIST AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA.

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT HAVANA'S SUPPORT FOR ONE OF THE INDEPENDENCE PARTIES SHOULD BE VIEWED--THE NEW PUERTO RICAN SOCIALIST PARTY. IT ACTUALLY MAINTAINS A SELF-STYLED "EMBASSY" IN HAVANA. THE OTHER INDEPENDENCE SPLINTER GROUP--THE PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY (P.I.P.)--HAS REJECTED ANY ALLIANCE WITH THE PUERTO RICAN SOCIALIST GROUP.

THE P.I.P. CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR, RUBEN BERRIOS, RECENTLY PAID TRIBUTE TO PUERTO RICO'S TRADITIONAL CLIMATE OF POLITICAL TOLERANCE. HE SAID, "THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN PUERTO RICO." AND HE NOTED THAT PUERTO RICANS ENJOY TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS WHEN HE SAID, "WE CAN GO WITH A HABEAS CORPUS INTO (ANY) COURT."

AT ANY RATE, THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT, DESPITE HAVANA'S DISRUPTIVE EFFORT, IT IS THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES WHO WILL DECIDE THEIR POLITICAL FUTURE--AND NOT HAVANA. AND THAT, AS THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM RECOGNIZE, IS AS IT SHOULD BE.